

APHIS Waiver Concept

... A message from Dr. Craig Reed about the new APHIS Waiver Tool ...

Thank you for taking a few minutes from your busy schedule. I want to talk about a new tool called waivers that will help you achieve the ultimate goals of your reinvention and re-engineering initiatives. Waivers give you the opportunity to change APHIS rules, regulations, policies, procedures, and processes that tie your hands. One of the chief features of the waiver tool is that it can be used by everyone from frontline people and managers to administrative technicians, professionals and policy-making and oversight entities. With waivers, we can support our missions with lower service costs, increased customer satisfaction, and higher efficiency and effectiveness.

There are good reasons why I'm excited about this waiver tool. First, we have the highest level of support for people claiming and requesting waivers. Last year Vice President Gore announced the Presidential Directive signed by President Clinton that outlined the use of waivers. This effort continues the Vice President's reinventing government initiatives. Shortly after the Vice President's announcement, Deputy Agriculture Secretary Richard Rominger announced that USDA was issuing a blanket waiver from internal rules for all of the department's reinvention laboratories.

There are many examples of APHIS employees and employees from other agencies successfully using waivers. The original White House memo cited the work of APHIS' tort claims adjudication team who cut the processing time on insurance claims of less than \$2,500 from 51 days to eight days by waiving unnecessary procedures. Many more examples are conveniently posted on the internet.

I realize that it's unusual for frontline people to be so involved with changing policies and regulations. You now have complete access to guidance 24 hours a day on the internet. The waiver web page provides guidelines that walk you through the steps to identify if a waiver is needed, how to use collaborative relationships to gain support for the waiver, and many other issues you may face throughout a change process.

You also have access to simple, fast communication about waivers from the beginning of the process to the end. Your results will be available on the APHIS Waiver web page. This documentation is very helpful. It communicates that change

DR. REED, APHIS ADMINISTRATOR:

"MY GOAL IS TO CREATE A FAST TRACK FOR THE PROLIFERATION OF IMPROVEMENTS TO OUR SERVICE AND MISSION DELIVERY."

"I AM ISSUING A BLANKET WAIVER FOR APHIS AND PROGRAM RULES, REGULATIONS, POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES."

**Visit the
APHIS Waiver Website
at
www.aphis.usda.gov/mb/bpt
Or call
Business Practices Team at
612-370-2147 for more
information on Waivers.**

does work in positive ways. It also communicates the results so others can learn from your experiences.

I call upon our APHIS colleagues in policy and oversight to explore how they could help us succeed in achieving our improvement goals. Specifically, I ask the members of policy and oversight to help you communicate your needs to our external stakeholders and advocate your solutions to the barriers for triple win solutions for APHIS, the government, and the American public.

To make it easier for our APHIS colleagues in policy and oversight to respond to your needs for communication and advocacy, I am issuing a blanket waiver for APHIS and program rules, regulations, policies, procedures and processes. Let me repeat that. **APHIS and program rules, regulations, policies, procedures, and processes are waived for people who are implementing improvements to service and mission delivery and have identified these as obstacles to achieving their intended results.**

You can expect APHIS support for your waivers in three areas: (1) Assistance and advocacy; (2) Fast track processing with few limitations; and (3) communication. Assistance and advocacy are important for ensuring the success of our change initiatives. I have asked the Business Practices Team to lead the APHIS effort to use waivers. The Business Practices Team has a proven track record for helping with new ways of doing business in APHIS. They have direct connections with NPR and are usually found at the heart of some of the most critical changes for frontline mission delivery and customer service. I have complete confidence that they will help you with waivers and other changes you are undertaking. Specifically, they will help you determine the need for a waiver, collaborate with various government organizations, gain support for the change or waiver, clarify objectives, and communicate your proposals and results.

To ensure a fast track process with few limitations, I have stipulated that only the APHIS Administrator or the Deputy Administrator can deny a waiver. Some rules and policies are necessary to ensure credibility and integrity. Others directly support our mission areas and obligations as employees, managers, and civil servants. Rules and policies cannot be waived for: grant program recipients, laws and statutes, treaty agreements, Executive Orders, negotiated labor agreements, civil rights protections, or anything contrary to APHIS mission and appropriation requirements. Changes in these areas must take a different route than waivers. However, there are many more rules and policies that keep us from fulfilling our missions and obligations that I and other Agency authority-holders can waive. My goal with this statement is to create a “fast track” for the proliferation of improvements to our service and mission delivery. I am looking to the policy and oversight groups to formulate aggressive action plans for the identification of opportunities to use waivers.

The Business Practices Team will help facilitate communication by posting information on our waiver website. The website is an important resource for everyone to learn about options in service and mission delivery. You can visit the site at this

address: (the address, <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mb/bpt/waiver.html> will appear on screen) .

You will find answers to frequently asked questions about waivers, examples of waiver documentation, some step-by-step guidance on the waiver process and examples of results people are getting with their waivers. There are also links to NPR's Waiver Clearinghouse which documents waivers from other government agencies.

In closing, I'm proud to say that APHIS employees and teams have been in the forefront of reinvention activities. Over the past five years, APHIS employees and teams have created 16 reinvention labs and received 16 Hammer Awards. The Plant Pest Permitting Team, our latest Reinvention Lab and Hammer Award winner, improved the efficiency and effectiveness of the permitting process with an update of the Code of Federal Regulations.

The Preclearance Trust Funds Management Team received their Hammer Award last October in Mexico City for their achievements in streamlining and decentralizing the billing process for mango and citrus inspection services. Their model for preclearance services is currently being evaluated for replication throughout APHIS. This team's success is just one example of how leadership from the frontlines transforms the services provided by APHIS to citizens and the regulated business community.

My thanks to these pioneers. Their tenacity over the past several years has shown all of us a thing or two about how to make an important difference in those things our customers care about. I encourage you to follow their lead and make APHIS a model of customer service success. Thank you all for your time and effort toward that end.

Dr. Craig Reed, Administrator
Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service